

title to land have arisen, I believe the Runanga has been the means of doing some good, by investigating and promptly settling, to the satisfaction of the Maori disputants, quarrels about land, which might otherwise, through the tardy operation of the Land Court, have resulted in a breach of the peace. The Runanga, however, is not satisfied with merely settling the disputes, but arrogates to itself the power of granting a certificate of title and taking fees, and professes to ignore entirely the operation of the Native Land Court, whose awards, in many instances, the Maoris decline to accept, by refusing to take up the Crown grants, which Henry Matua has set them strongly against.

The Runanga also takes upon itself to settle all Maori debts and claims, and tries and punishes offences, appropriating the fees and fines; the paying in of which to the Colonial Treasury is not to their mind.

With regard to my own Court, I have not had quite so many cases to settle as during former years; but this is partly to be attributed to the freedom from crime and disputes of the river population, and owing to the Natives being so much taken up with attending meetings about land, and in surveying large blocks, prior to putting them through the Land Court and selling to the Government. A determination has been come to respecting the survey of immense tracts of land, including the Murimotu country, which will lead, no doubt, to their parting with a good deal of territory, which, ere long, will be opened up to settlement, whereby the interests of the colony will be much served, and a general impetus given to the tide of civilization and progress. With regard to settlement on the banks of the Wanganui River, the Natives are anxious to invite same, by offering many choice spots for lease to Europeans, and I am hopeful soon to see several thriving homesteads on the Wanganui River, whereby an improved state of affairs will be brought about, and immense benefit conferred upon the Maoris, by having thrifty and industrious white settlers in their neighbourhood, from whom they can learn how to turn their property to the best account, and whose manners and customs they will be sure to imitate. I hope, ere long, to see many experienced husbandmen, and even artificers, located on the banks of this noble river, from whom the rising generation of aboriginals can learn many a lesson in the branches of industry, science, and trade.

In the matter of politics much more attention is shown than formerly, and each sitting of Parliament is looked forward to with an increasing interest and excitement by the Natives. The general elections are already a matter of discussion amongst them, and Major Kemp is likely to be put forward as the Maori member for the West Coast District, and his candidature will not be opposed by any Wanganui Natives, as formerly, so that he will stand a good chance of being returned, and, I need hardly say, he will make an excellent member.

The annunciations of the Taranaki Prophet, Te Whiti, still engage the attention of many of the Natives; and deputations from the tribes continue to visit him at Pariaka, at his annual meetings. The Natives on the Wanganui River seemed much impressed this year with his prognostications, which tend to solemnize the Maori mind, having reference to the second coming of Christ and the first resurrection, which momentous events Te Whiti pronounces to be at hand, and warns all to watch for the sign in the heavens! Without pronouncing any opinion on the foretellings of the Taranaki Seer, they seem to have a pacificatory effect upon his hearers, and I believe he gives good advice to the Natives respecting their general conduct—namely, to look to quiet and legal means for the redress of their supposed wrongs and grievances.

With respect to the Waitotara and Patea Natives, who were recently permitted by the Government to return to their ancestral homes, I am happy to be able to bear witness to their general good conduct since their return, and all feeling of animosity between the races in those neighbourhoods is fast dying out, and peace and prosperity prevail.

Several notable Maori Chiefs have passed away since I last wrote, two of whom, Pehi and Tahana Turoa, were principal chiefs of Wanganui, and men of influence and note in their time, whose places cannot be filled, being representatives of a generation fast dying out, whose successors are of quite another type and character. The name of Turoa was one of renown in Maoridom in days of yore, and will be thought of with respect and pride by the Maori in generations to come. Tahana Turoa, particularly, was a most intelligent and influential chief and assessor, and I much miss his aid and support in performing my official duties amongst the up-river Natives. He was an extensive land owner, and, contrary to the general custom, he left a will, which has lately been proved in the Supreme Court of the colony.

With regard to the moral and physical condition of the Maoris in these localities, I cannot report so favourably as I could wish. No marked advancement can be made by them in these respects till they change their mode of living, the communage of the Maori pa being a check to anything like a high state of moral or physical development.

With regard to the general appearance of the Natives in dress and cleanliness, a marked improvement has taken place, which I attribute in a great measure to the elevating influence upon them of the Maori schools, which continue to flourish, and about which I shall speak more fully in my special report upon them, as requested by the Hon. the Native Minister. An attempt has been made to put up one or two wooden cottages; but it remains to be seen whether the owners will maintain exclusive occupation of same, and follow an improved and more civilized mode of living therein.

There is some talk of rebuilding their churches, and securing the services of a resident minister, a want which I should much like to see supplied, as I believe the frequent ministration of a good and energetic Christian missionary amongst them, at this time, would be followed by most satisfactory results—namely, by a return to Christian observances and modes of worship, whereby a tone would be given to their morals, and an advancement made in all that is high and elevating. In a quiet way I do all I can to stir them up in these matters, and have sold a goodly number of Maori Bibles, which are in greater request than formerly. I have entered into communication with the Bishop of the Diocese on these subjects, and he has promised to accompany me in one of my visits to the far off interior, when the religious wants of the river Natives (some 2,000) will be brought under his personal observation, and an effort made to meet their requirements in this all-important matter. The attention of the Natives towards agricultural pursuits continues unabated, and a greater breadth of land has been